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KC818

無限の住人

29

沙村広明

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CHARIOT OF FIRE

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ADHERENCE (PART I)

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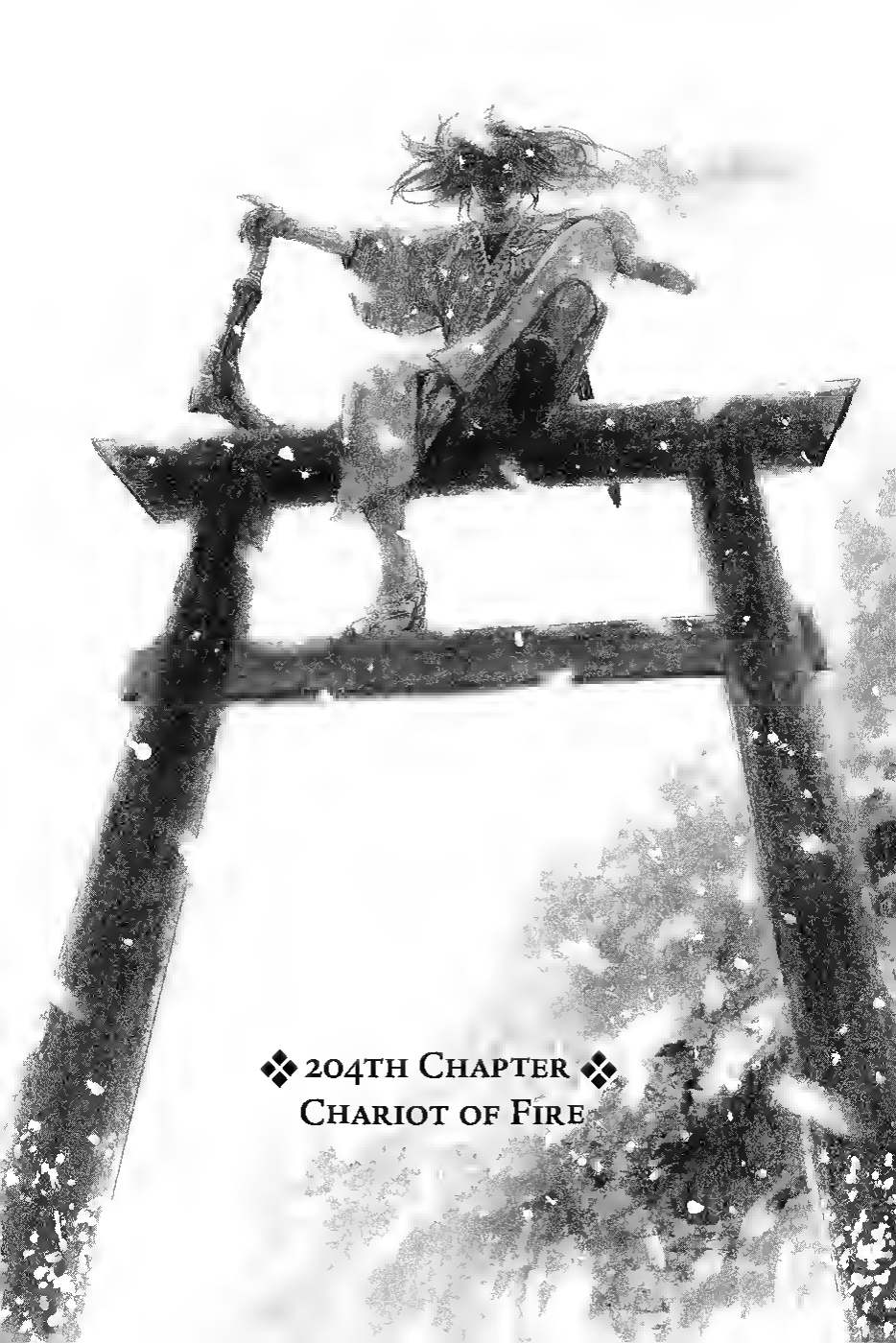
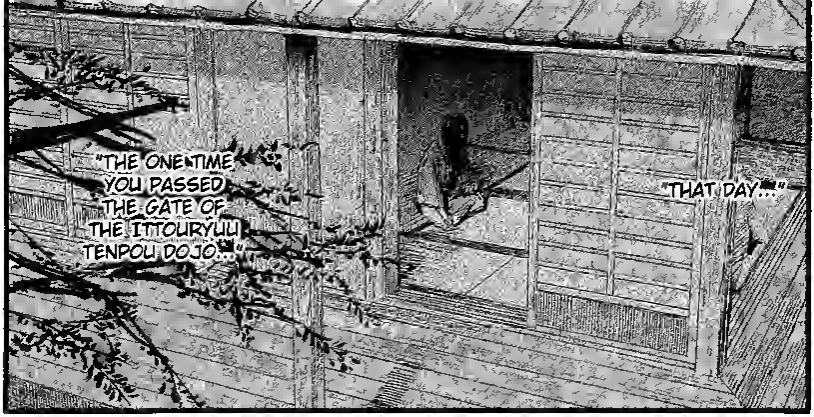
DANCE OF A HUNDRED VIEWS (PART II)



❖ 204th Chapter ❖
Chariot of Fire

"LORD HABAKI KAGIMURA..."
"LONG AGO... NO, IT ONLY SEEMS THAT WAY. I REMEMBER THAT DAY."
"I'M FACE TO FACE WITH YOU."


"THE ONE TIME YOU PASSED THE GATE OF THE ITTOURYUU TENPOU DOJO..."
"THAT DAY..."

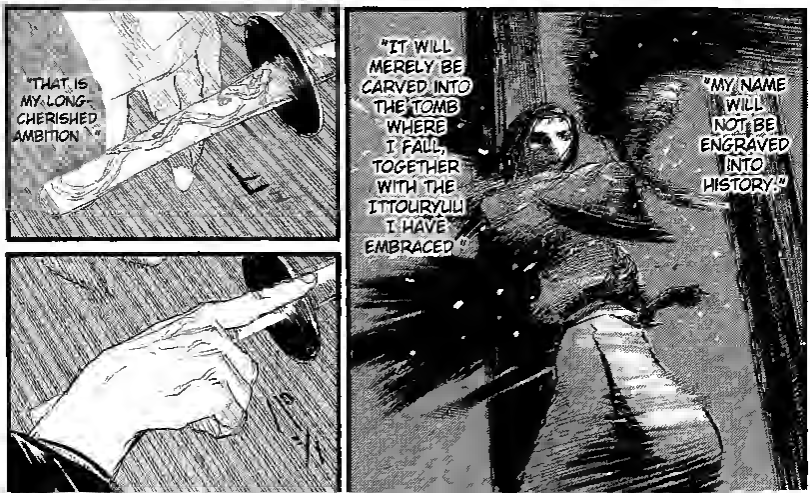
"YOU THOUGHT TO CRUSH THE ITTOURYUU WITH JUST A SINGLE SWING OF YOUR IRON HAMMER."
"THAT DAY, YOU LEFT THE CAJOLERY OF THE 'KOUKENJO' AS A SOUVENIR... WITHIN THAT HEART."

"THE 'KOUKENJO' IS THE TRUE JAPAN-"
"YOU THINK SO EVEN NOW... BUT YOU WON'T BE GRASPING THE SHAFT OF THAT HAMMER, BUT OUR HANDS."

"YOUR ANTIQUATED 'WARRIOR'S' PRIDE IS NO LONGER OF ANY USE TO THIS NATION!"
"DON'T BE SO CONCEITED! I... THE GOVERNMENT COULD NEVER JOIN HANDS WITH MADMEN LIKE YOU..."

"...THAT YOU HAVE DEVOTED YOURSELF TO YOUR STUDIES WITHOUT THINKING ANYTHING OF THE STRENGTH OF THE SWORD!?"
"IN THAT CASE, ARE YOU SAYING..."

"MY SWORD IS ONE WHICH DESTROYS MY ENEMIES AS WELL AS MYSELF-"
"THAT'S RIGHT."


"THAT IS MY LONG-CHERISHED AMBITION."
"IT WILL MERELY BE CARVED INTO THE TOMB WHERE I FALL, TOGETHER WITH THE ITTOURYUU I HAVE EMBRACED."
"MY NAME WILL NOT BE ENGRAVED INTO HISTORY."

...THIS FELLOW...

ギシッ

HE ALWAYS KEEPS A TORII GATE...
...ON THE OPPOSITE SIDE FROM HIS HATCHET'S DEFENSIVE RADIUS.
THIS NARROW PATH IS A PLACE TO BE AVOIDED WITH A WEAPON LIKE HIS, WHICH RELIES ON LARGE SWINGS TO BUILD UP CENTRIFUGAL FORCE.
I TRIED TO LURE HIM HERE, BUT...
AS EXPECTED OF THE HEAD OF HIS SCHOOL.
WHAT A DETERMINED MAN.

HOWEVER,
...
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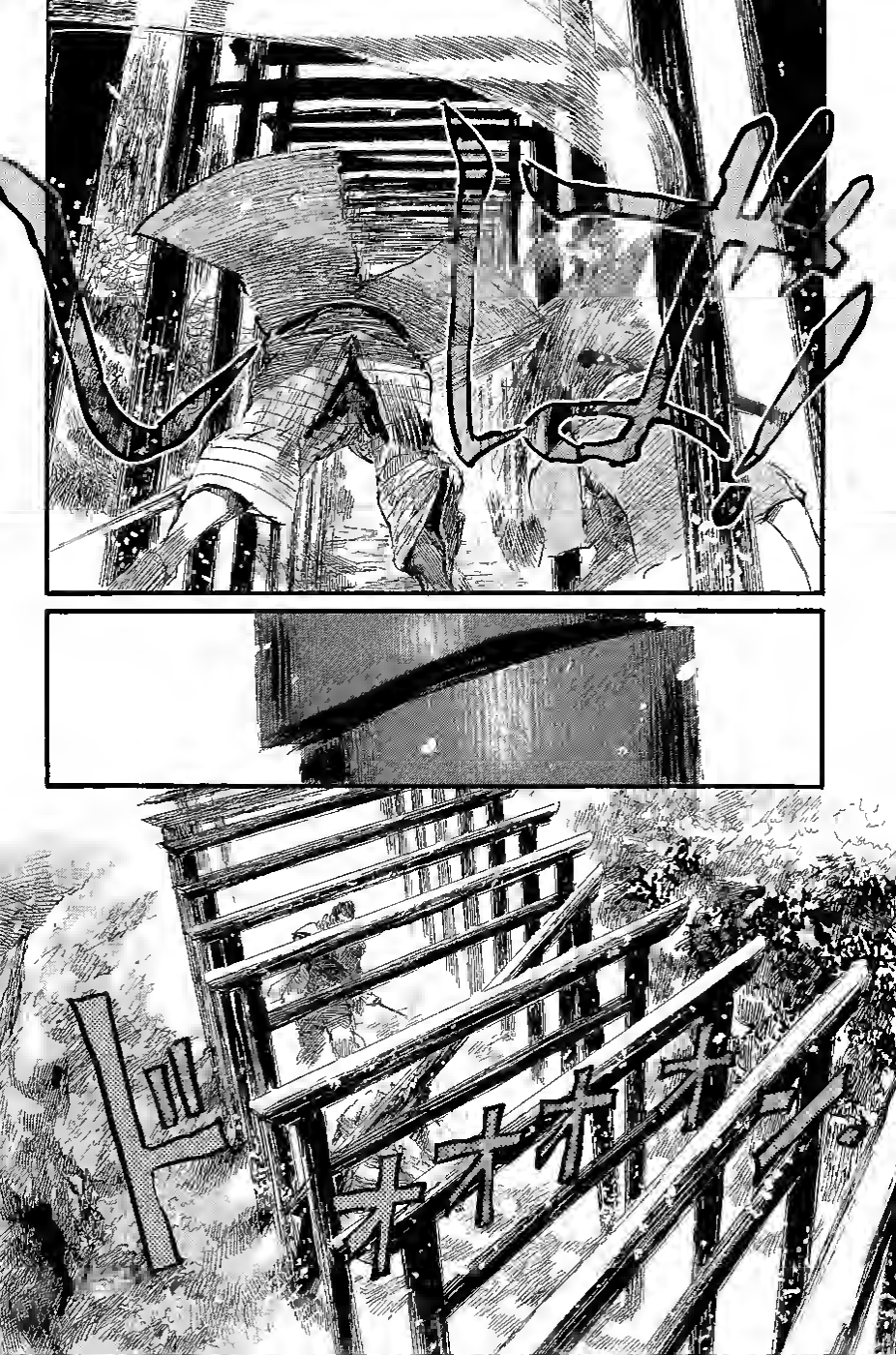
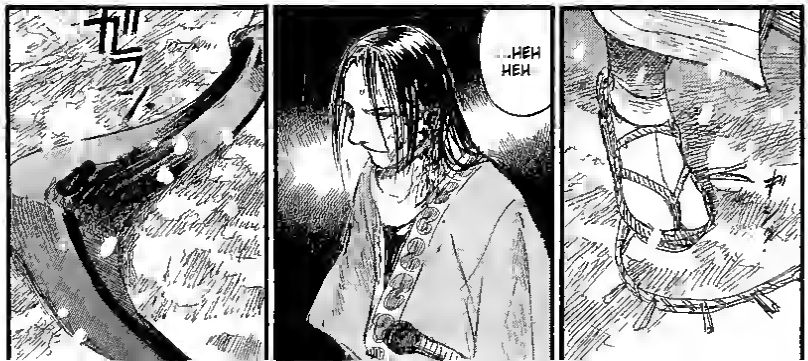
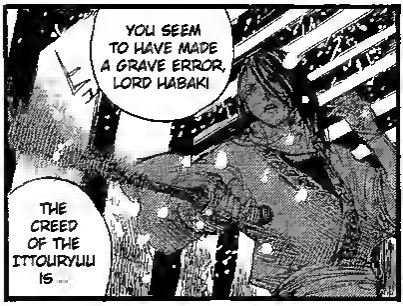
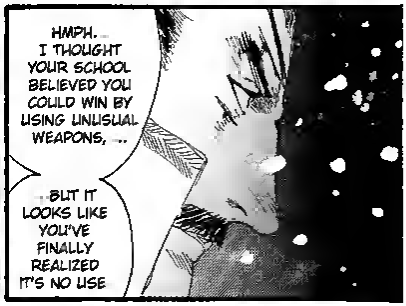
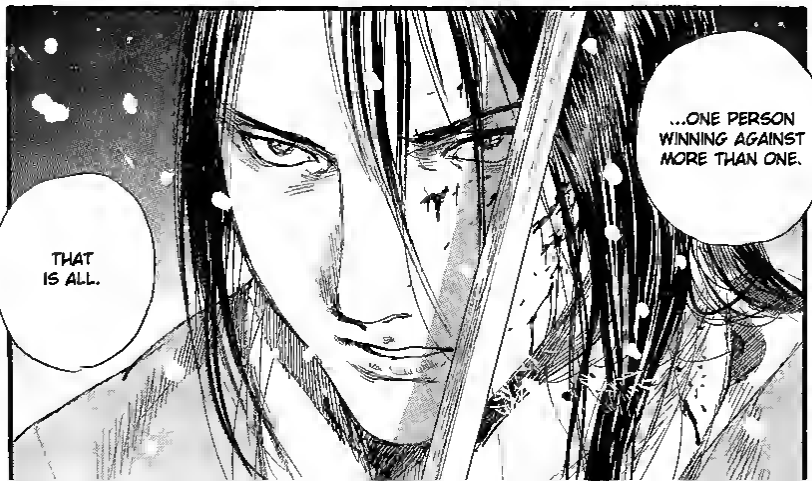

血未ホホキシ

DON'T THINK I'M THE SAME AS THE OPPONENTS YOU'VE FACED UNTIL NOW.
ANOTSU KAGEHISA.


...HEH HEH


YOU SEEM TO HAVE MADE A GRAVE ERROR, LORD HABAKI
THE CREED OF THE ITTOURYUU IS ...


HMPH. I THOUGHT YOUR SCHOOL BELIEVED YOU COULD WIN BY USING UNUSUAL WEAPONS, ..
BUT IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE FINALLY REALIZED IT'S NO USE


...ONE PERSON WINNING AGAINST MORE THAN ONE.
THAT IS ALL.

UUOOOOHHHHH!!!

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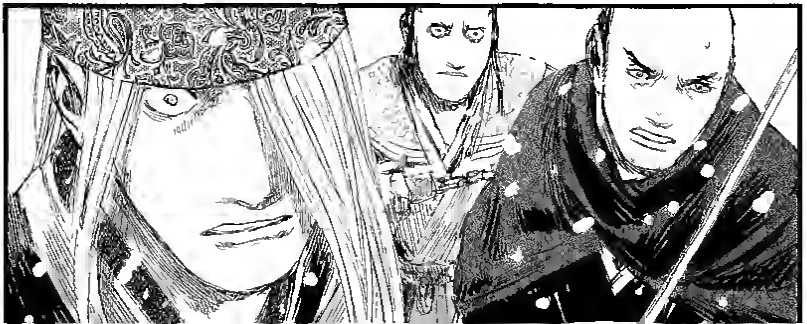
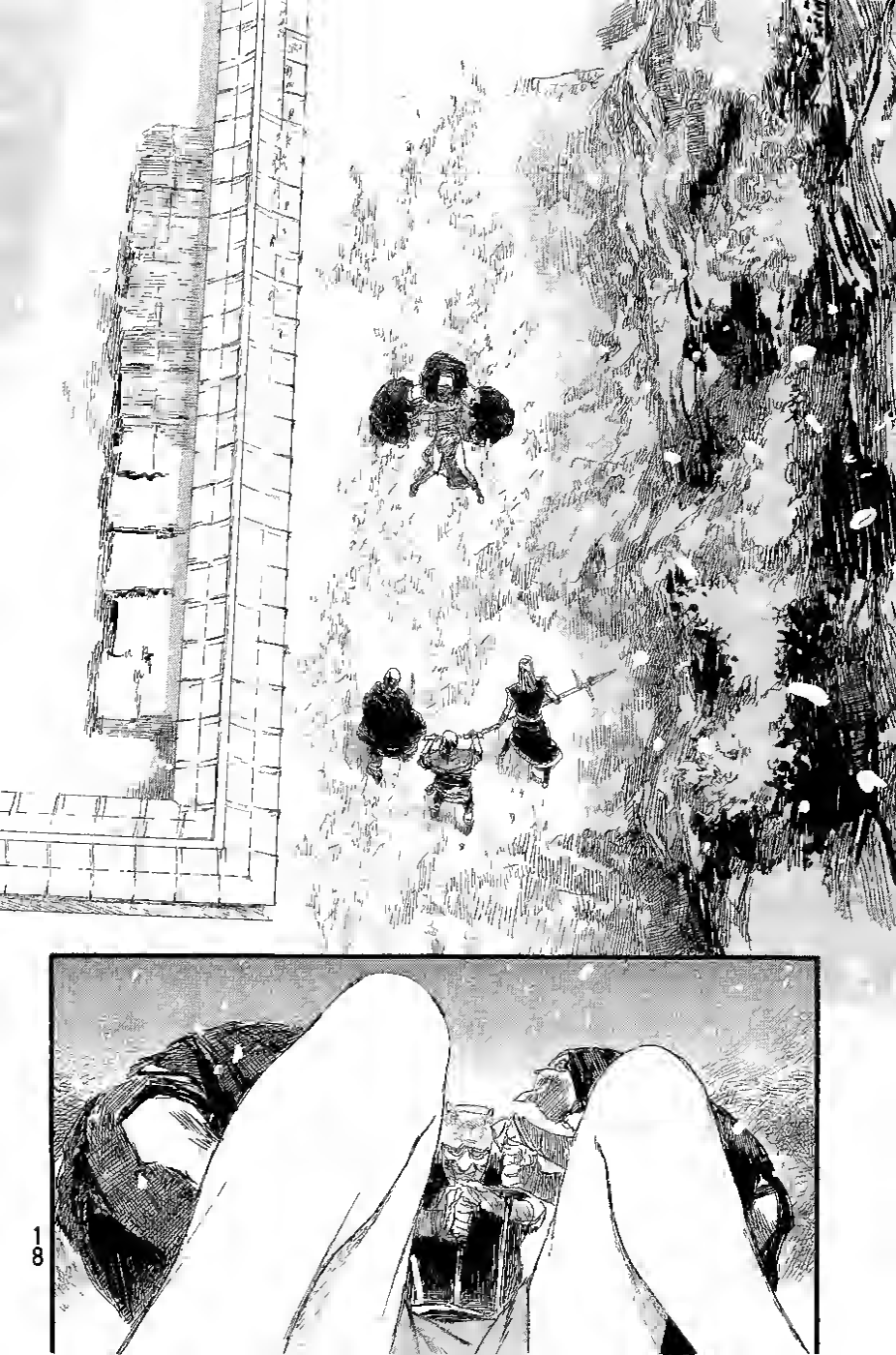
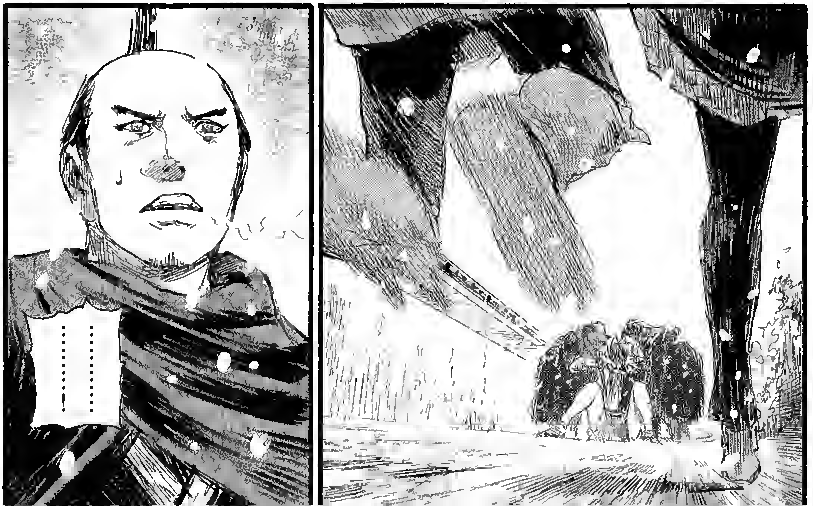
ザシュッ




DON'T LEAVE A GAP, MITAKE!
DID THE SNAKE GROUP ... TAKE DOWN THAT MONSTER ?
DID THEY GET HER ?
DID...

WHETHER SHE'S DEAD OR HALF-DEAD, WE'LL FINISH HER OFF!!
COME, TARIE-SHIN!


.....!

G... GET BACK, DOMA!! TARIE-SHINN!!
SHE ISN'T EVEN HALF-DEAD!! THAT WOMAN IS...
...UN-HARMED !!

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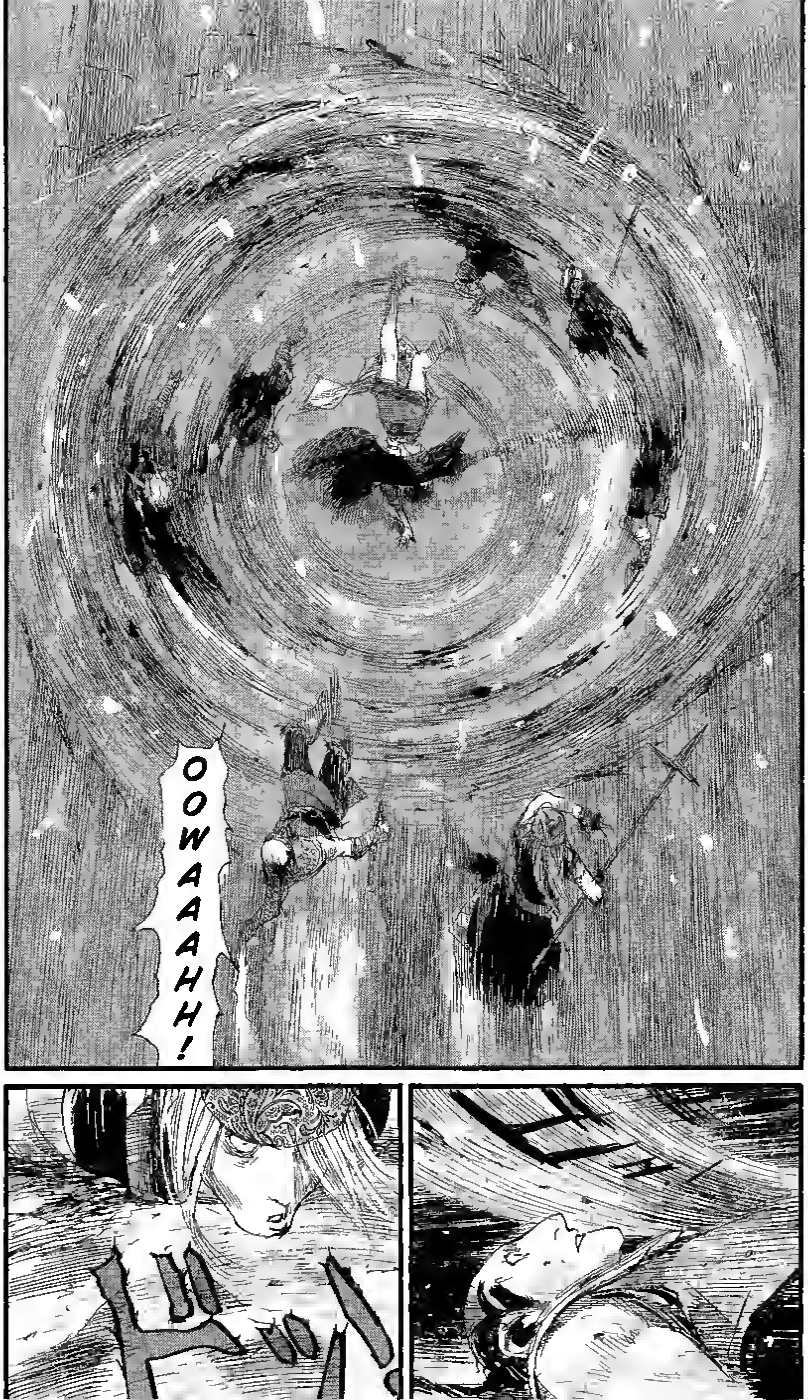
ハ!
!?
AH...


OOWAAAHH!

HOOOOOOOH!!
HNNNNNNNH!!

KAA!

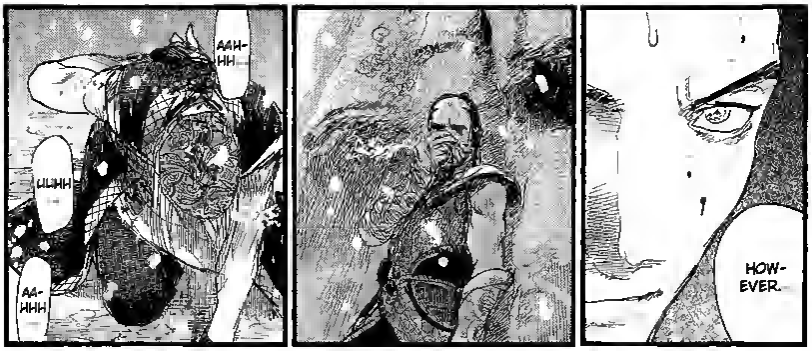
ヒュ
ヒュ
ヒュ

HAS SHE NOTICED?

うおおお
TAKE THIS!
JUST LIKE THAT..!
!!
!?
フワッ

NO MATTER HOW MANY SWORDS WE HAVE, IT WON'T MAKE A DIFFERENCE.
WITHIN THE RANGE OF THIS WOMAN'S BLADE..!!
ｶﾅ!
IT CAUSED A LOT OF PAIN... LOSING BANINROKU AT MT. TSUKUBA.
SHIT... IF IT'S COME TO THIS...

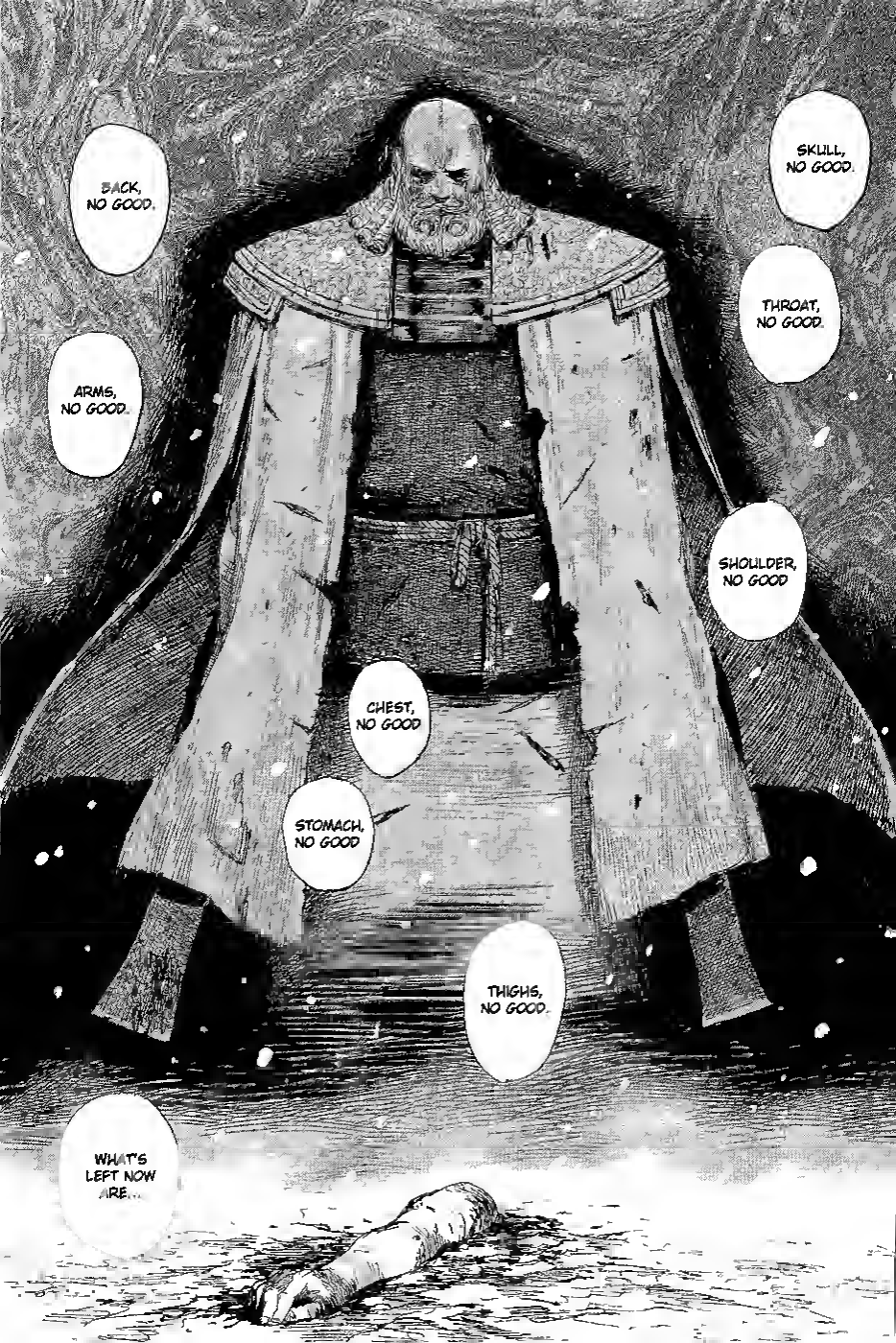
THOSE EYES ARE LIKE THIN ICE, BUT... JUST A LITTLE LONGER. A LITTLE LONGER, AND...
THERE'S STILL A CHANCE OF VICTORY... IT STILL REMAINS.
BUT... NOT YET.



CHAPTER 204 END

❖ 205th Chapter ❖
Adherence (Part I)

HAAH...
HAAH.
HAAH!
HAAH.
HAAH...
HAAH.
MR. MANJI, ARE YOU ALRIGHT!?
I'M NOT DOING TOO GOOD, BUT...
THANKS TO THAT... I WAS ABLE TO SEE A FEW THINGS


BACK, NO GOOD.
SKULL, NO GOOD.
THROAT, NO GOOD.
ARMS, NO GOOD.
SHOULDER, NO GOOD
CHEST, NO GOOD
STOMACH, NO GOOD
THIGHS, NO GOOD.
WHAT'S LEFT NOW ARE...

FINGERS
SHINS
CROWN OF THE HEAD
AND THAT'S ABOUT IT
WELL WELL...
AND HERE I THOUGHT IT WAS JUST ANOTSU, HABAKI AND THE GIRL THAT WERE SCARY.

EVEN JUST AN ARM CAN RETURN TO LIFE ...

I'VE BURIED A PEOPLE JUST AS MY GREAT BENEFACTOR, LORD HABAKI KAGIMURA, INSTRUCTED.
I WASN'T CONCERNED UNTIL YESTERDAY.

...I'VE MET A MAN I WANT TO BUTCHER FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART.
TODAY, FOR THE FIRST TIME, ..
BY GOD'S DIVINE PROVIDENCE, THIS MAN CANNOT BE FORGIVEN.

ドガッ!!

THAT'S
...HE'S GETTING USED TO RECIEVING THOSE ATTACKS... BUT EVEN SO

...BUT EVEN THOSE ARE A LONG SHOT.
THERE ARE A FEW UNGUARDED PLACES VISIBLE, HIS FINGERS, TOES AND SHINS...
THEY'RE JUST LIKE BAIT TO LURE IN HIS PREY.
KUH ..!

THESE... ARE ALL I HAVE LEFT !?
THAT'S RIGHT WHEN I WAS CAPTURED BY MR. SHIRA...
MOST OF THEM FELL INTO THE SWAMP...
...IT'S USELESS
CAN I BE CONFIDENT OF ACTUALLY HITTING HIS FINGERS OR SHINS?
WITH JUST THESE TWO..
HONESTLY .. NO!

IN THAT INSTANT, I'M SURE MANJI CAN...
BUT,...
IF I THROW THEM, I SHOULD BE ABLE TO DISTRACT HIM AT LEAST A LITTLE BIT.
IF I AIM FOR THE BREAKS IN HIS ARMOR...
IF I CAN DRIVE THEM INTO THAT THICK LEFT ARM...
...THIS IS SERIOUS.
I DON'T KNOW IF IT WILL EVEN BE HALF A SECOND...
AND RIGHT NOW, WITH ONLY ONE ARM...
IF THERE'S A PLACE LEFT WHERE HE CAN DEAL A FATAL WOUND IN ONE STRIKE...
MAYBE, EVEN WITH MANJI IN HIS CURRENT CONDITION...

NUAH
THE CROWN OF THE HEAD!!
ヤァ
!!
...EVEN IF YOU AIM FOR A DRAW, USING YOUR IMMORTALITY AS A SHIELD,

...YOU'RE THE SAME AS AN INSECT FLYING INTO THE FIRE.
IF YOUR BLADE DOESN'T REACH ME, ...

!!

NOT IN AN INSTANT...
WITH THESE TWO...

IT'S USELESS... THINK THINK!
IF I CAN'T HIT HIS VITALS WITH THESE TWO, SOMEHOW...

. STOPPING THE OPPONENT'S MOVEMENT FOR A FEW MOMENTS... WASN'T I ABLE TO DO THAT ONCE BEFORE!?
"SEVERAL INSTANTS" ...

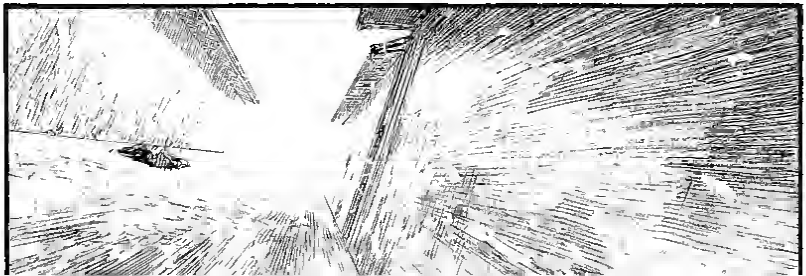
IN EDO CASTLE...

OHH
AH..!
.....

AOHH
!?
OOOH
...CURSED DEMON

GUN-POWDER...
OIL...
I NEED AT LEAST ONE OF THEM.
...OH
THAT'S RIGHT...
NAKAMINATO IS A TRADING PORT, SO...
...IF I JUST LOOK FOR A SHOP OR STORE-HOUSE...
I WON'T BE ANY HELP IF I STAY HERE LIKE THIS.

STAY ALIVE,
MANJI!



...SHIT.
I CAN GET ONTO THE ROOF TILES FROM OVER THERE.!
AH.
...CLOSE TO WHERE I FELL...
...THIS AREA IS...

ドキ
ン

UHYA-
AAUH!
WHA
..!

AH!
WHAT ON EARTH IS THIS!?
...AH.
IF I LISTEN CLOSELY, I CAN HEAR THEM FIGHTING...
...I SEE
HE'S . UP THERE
UWAH!
HUH!? BUT, WITHOUT THIS, HOW IS HE...
OH, THAT'S RIGHT, HE HAS A SWORD TOO, DOESN'T HE..?

BUT...
...SWORD AGAINST SWORD...
HOW IN THE WORLD CAN THEY FIGHT IN A PLACE LIKE THIS...?
キン
カァン

ド!!
ガッ
ボコッ
ガハッ!!

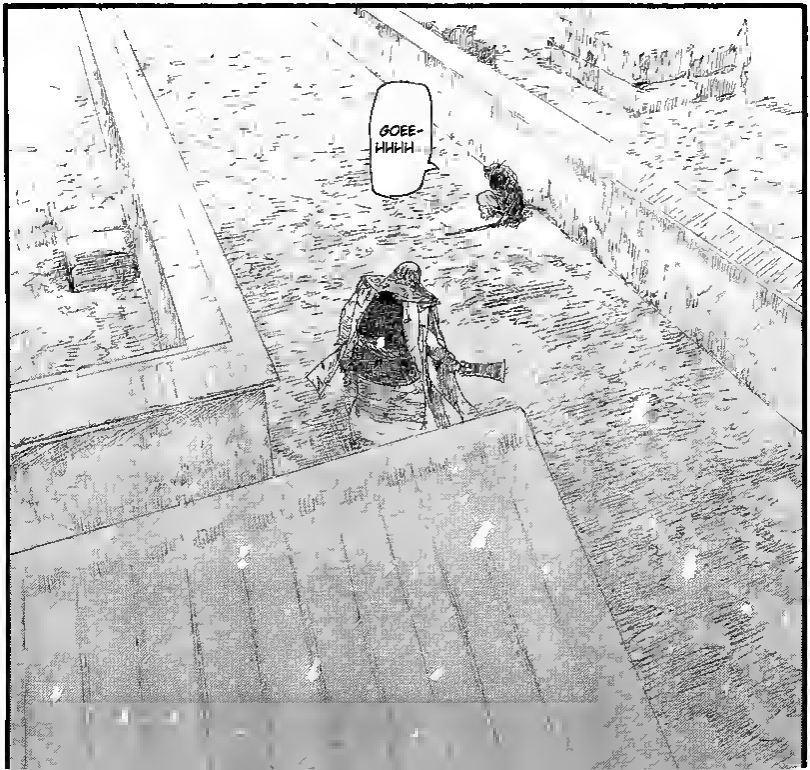
ｶﾞ!!
キィ…ィ…!!

...IT'S BECOME POSSIBLE FOR ME TO BLOCK YOU WITH MY OWN BLADE. THE FORCE HAS LESSENED.
...NOW THAT YOU'VE SWAPPED YOUR AXE FOR A SWORD.
HOWEVER!

CHAPTER 205 END

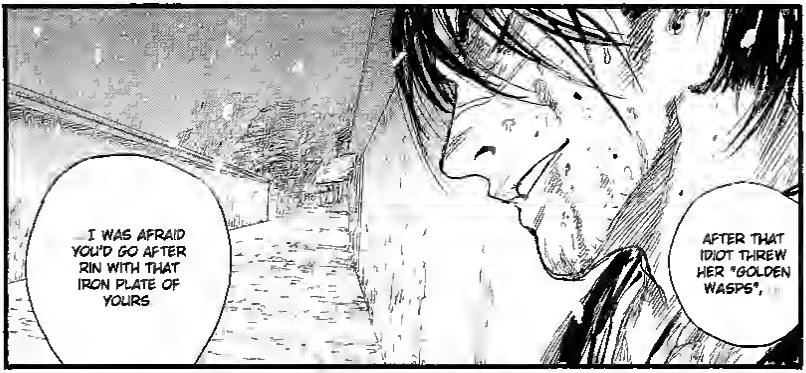
❖ 206th Chapter ❖
Adherence (Part II)

GOHOH
GOEH
GOHO
GEHOH
GEHOH


GOEE-
HHHH

THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I HAVE FOUGHT SO LONG AGAINST A SINGLE MAN.
.....!
BECAUSE MY BODY CAN RECOVER WHILE I FIGHT, ...
...THE LONGER THE FIGHT DRAGS ON, THE BETTER IT IS FOR ME...
WELL, I END UP FEELING LIKE THIS EVERY TIME
IS THAT SO...?
...AS LONG AS I CAN STAY ALIVE...

?
DON'T PLAY DUMB...
...WHILE THAT KID ISN'T HERE, LET ME THANK YOU IN HER PLACE.
BY THE WAY...

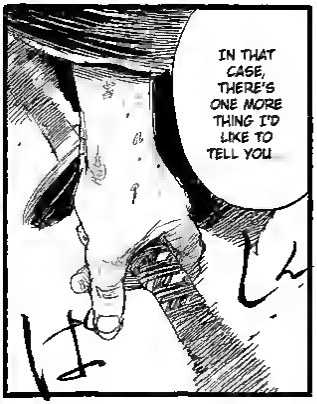

...I WAS AFRAID YOU'D GO AFTER RIN WITH THAT IRON PLATE OF YOURS
AFTER THAT IDIOT THREW HER "GOLDEN WASPS",

IT WAS ONLY THAT I WAS NOT CONFIDENT
...THAT I COULD PARRY YOUR SWORD WHILE LOOKING AT THAT GIRL.
.....
IT WAS NICE OF YOU TO DO NOTHING... HEH HEH!

I AM CONFIDENT THAT I CAN WIN THIS FIGHT, ...
...BUT I CANNOT AFFORD TO TAKE YOU LIGHTLY.

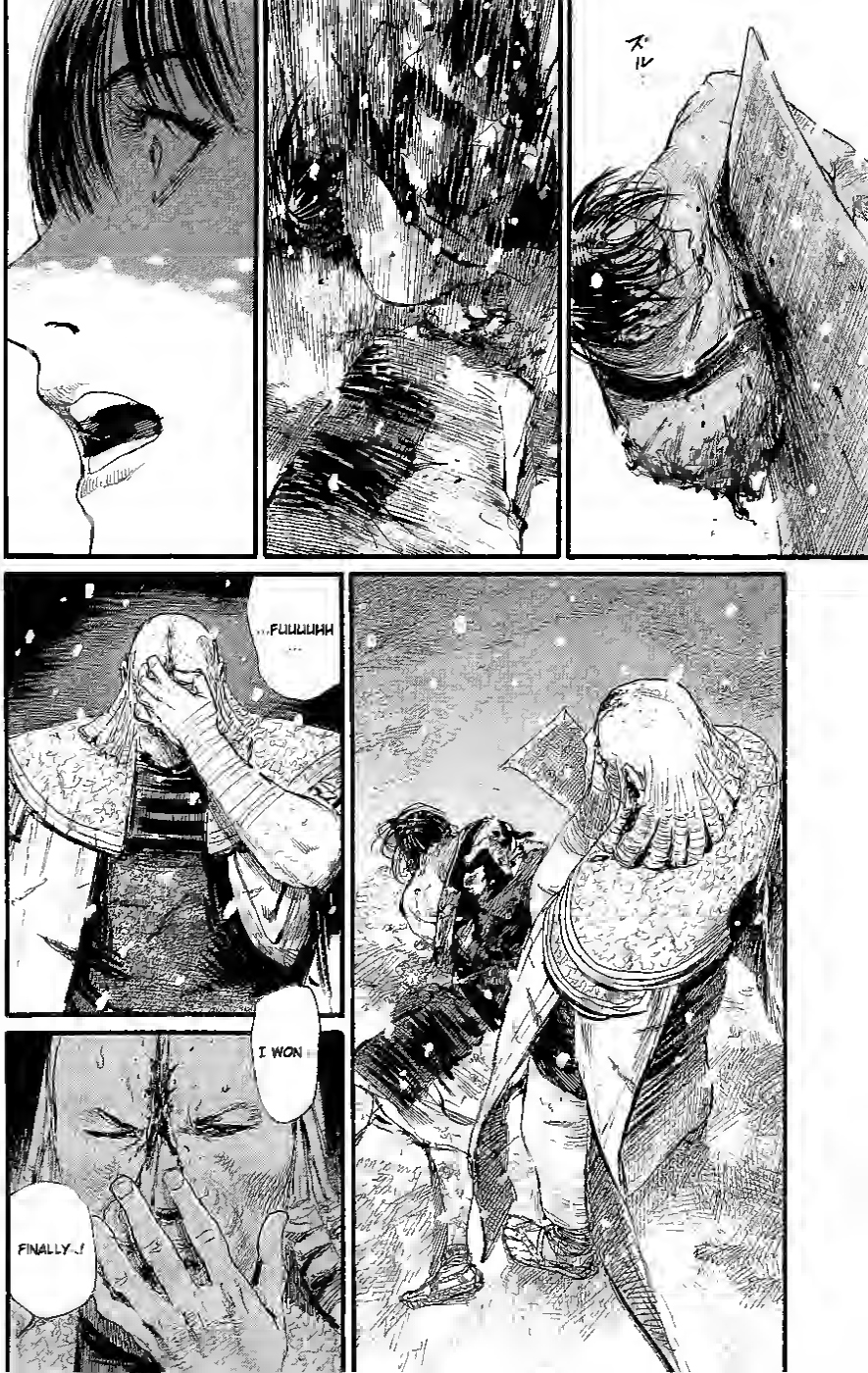
THANKS FOR THAT.
WELL THEN... SO THAT WAS YOUR REASON...

...INTEND TO WIN.
I ALSO...


IN THAT CASE, THERE'S ONE MORE THING I'D LIKE TO TELL YOU.

IS THAT SO?

ズズズ
WHAT IS THIS ? THANKS TO DRAGGING THIS THING AROUND .
..I FEEL LIKE ALL MY BLOOD HAS GONE TO MY LEGS
PUAH!
...HELP MANJI...
LIKE THIS, I'LL BE ABLE TO..
I'M GLAD .


ズル
...FUUUUHH...
I WON
FINALLY...!

"IMMORTAL"..
THERE CAN BE
NO WORSE
ENEMY.
NO MATTER
HOW MUCH I
PRESS
DOWN, ...
.. NO MATTER
HOW MUCH IT
LOOKS LIKE
MY VICTORY,
...IN
THE END...
WHICH OF
US WILL
REALLY BE
CRUSHED..?
-NO.
WHICH OF
US WILL
TRULY BE
VICTORIOUS?
I WILL WIN
NO MATTER
WHAT...
EVEN THAT...
HOWEVER,
EVEN IN THIS
STATE
ONLY A
STARFISH
COULD TAKE
THIS MUCH
WITHOUT
DYING.
TEN TO ONE,
HE'LL DIE
HE'LL DIE...
BUT,..

THIS WILL MAKE SURE.

ｻﾞｻﾞｻﾞｻﾞｻﾞ！

YOUR LIFE HAS NO VALUE AS A SHIELD
I DOUBT YOU HEARD LORD HABAKI'S WORDS
BUT I WAS TOLD TO BUTCHER YOU AS WELL
.....

IF YOU DON'T MOVE...
.....
I SHOULD BE ABLE TO KILL YOU BOTH BY SMASHING THROUGH THE MAN'S TORSO AND YOUR HEAD AT THE SAME TIME.
...PLEASE DO SO.

UNTIL TODAY, I'VE BEEN RELYING COMPLETELY ON THE STRENGTH OF MANJI'S SWORD IN ORDER TO CONTINUE MY JOURNEY.
MANJI IS MY BODYGUARD.
THAT WOULD BE THE SAME AS BEING KILLED.
WITHOUT THIS MAN, THERE'S NO WAY FOR ME TO CONTINUE MY JOURNEY.
...THERE'S JUST ONE THING...
ONE ACT OF MERCY I WANT TO ASK OF YOU.

MY WISH IN THIS LIFE IS TO WITNESS THE END OF THE ITTOURYUU
UMM. WHAT I MEAN IS..
YOU MAY BRING DOWN YOUR SWORD ONCE YOU HAVE HEARD MY STORY, BUT..
..MY REAL ENEMY IS THE SAME AS YOURS. ANOTSU KAGEHISA!
..IF I AM TRULY TO MEET MY DEMISE IN THIS LAND..
..MY ONLY REGRET WILL BE THAT I WAS NOT ABLE TO SEE ANOTSU KAGEHISA'S CORPSE WITH MY OWN EYES..
PLEASE SHOW MERCY.
ONCE I HAVE SEEN PROOF OF ANOTSU KAGEHISA'S DEATH, I WILL GLADLY KILL MYSELF. UNTIL THEN, PLEASE..
GIRL.
THE REASON FOR YOUR WORDS IS APPARENT AT A GLANCE..
TO MY EYES ..

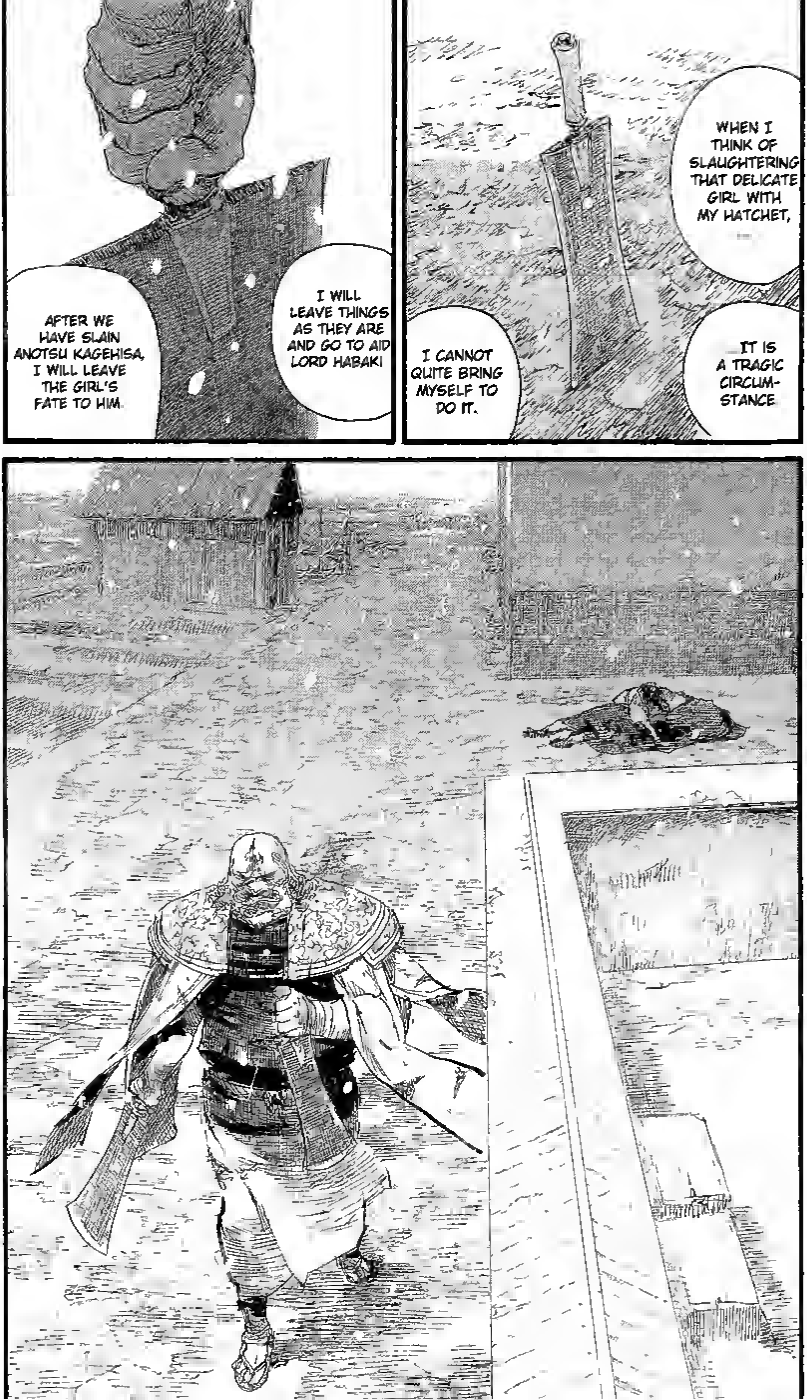
...IT SEEMS THAT YOU ARE DESPERATE TO GIVE THIS MAN'S BODY TIME TO RECOVER.
YOU CAN TELL?
YES, I CAN
I HAVE CUT HIS FLESH...
...SEVERED HIS ARMS... AND YET, COULD IT BE POSSIBLE?
.....
HE STILL LIVES, EVEN WITH HIS TORSO SLICED IN TWO... HE MUST BE LIKE A STARFISH
...THIS MAN

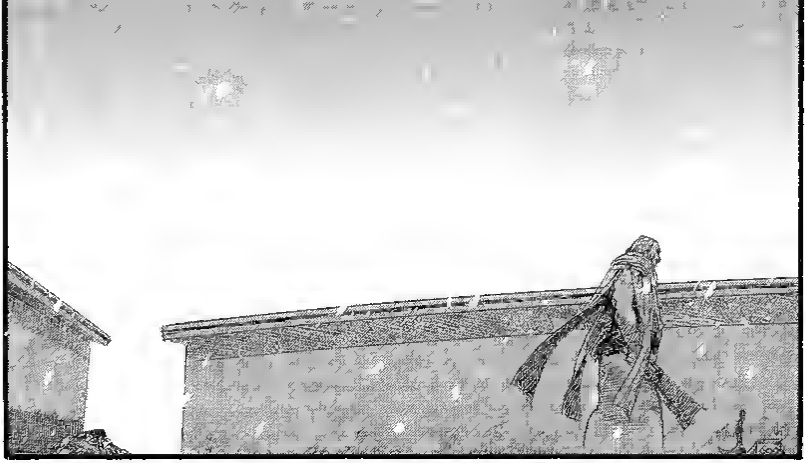
MY BROTHER
MANJI IS MY BODYGUARD
MY FATHER.
HE HAS STOOD AGAINST OPPONENTS SUPERIOR TO HIMSELF
AND... FOR MY SAKE...
HE'S TAUGHT ME SO MANY THINGS DURING OUR JOURNEY.
SO...
I AM
I'M THE ONE WHO KILLED MANJI..
...ISN'T YOUR FAULT.
THEREFORE, THIS...

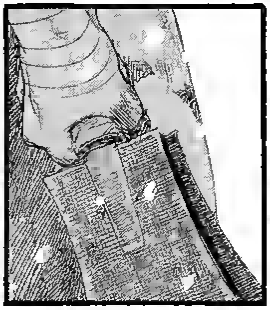
IF THIS MAN DIES...
. I CAN'T LIVE EITHER
NOT WITHOUT MANJI.
HE WAS WOUNDED IN MY PLACE
AND HE DIED IN MY PLACE
THIS MAN'S DEATH.. IS MY DEATH AS WELL.
...WHETHER YOUR WORDS ARE TRUE OR FALSE NO LONGER MATTERS.

...THE RED DOES NOT STAND OUT AGAINST THIS RED EARTH, BUT...
ON THE KIMONO COVERING HIM...
THE BLOOD OF THE HUNDRED-MAN-SLAYER. IS SEEPING OUT

IF THE HUNDRED-MAN-SLAYER WERE BEGINNING TO REVIVE UNDER THAT CLOTH, THIS IMMENSE LOSS OF BLOOD... WOULD HAVE CEASED LONG AGO.
IN OTHER WORDS, HIS BLOOD IS CONTINUING TO FLOW OUT...
IT SPREADS RAPIDLY AS YOU SPOKE.
HE IS ALREADY DEAD...
THIS MAN IS DEAD.
...TO RECOVER FROM HAVING HIS TORSO SLICED IN TWO...
YES. IT SEEMS ABSURD.


AFTER WE HAVE SLAIN ANOTSU KAGEHISA, I WILL LEAVE THE GIRL'S FATE TO HIM.
I WILL LEAVE THINGS AS THEY ARE AND GO TO AID LORD HABAKI
I CANNOT QUITE BRING MYSELF TO DO IT.
WHEN I THINK OF SLAUGHTERING THAT DELICATE GIRL WITH MY HATCHET,
...IT IS A TRAGIC CIRCUM-STANCE

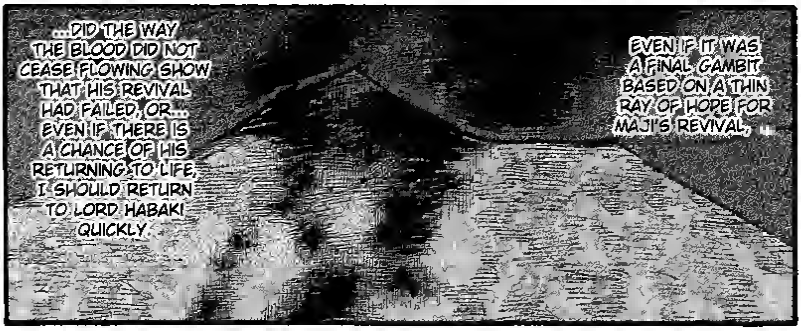




I FEEL UNEASY...

THESE TWO SCENES...

HE... WHAT WAS THE REAL MOTIVE BEHIND THAT ACTION?
COVERING MANJI IN HER OWN CLOAK...


...DID THE WAY THE BLOOD DID NOT CEASE FLOWING SHOW THAT HIS REVIVAL HAD FAILED, OR... EVEN IF THERE IS A CHANCE OF HIS RETURNING TO LIFE, I SHOULD RETURN TO LORD HABAKI QUICKLY.
EVEN IF IT WAS A FINAL GAMBIT BASED ON A THIN RAY OF HOPE FOR MAJI'S REVIVAL,...

IT IS RIDICULOUS TO WORRY... HE'S FINISHED AND UNABLE TO MOVE
HOW-EVER..

I SHOULD BE ABLE TO PUT AN END TO HIS LIFE EASILY, ALONG WITH THE GIRL'S .

WHY DID SHE REMOVE HER WRIST-GUARDS?

TAKING OFF THER LONG CLOAK

WHY DID SHE GO TO THE TROUBLE OF REMOVING HER WRIST-GUARDS IN SUCH A SHORT TIME?
EVEN IF TH..T-WERE SO...
...TO HIDE THE PITIFUL CORPSE?

WAS THERE SOMETHING SHE COULD NOT DO WITH THEM ON!?
ばん

ガラ!
UOO-
OAA-
HHH
..!!
!?...
NUOOHHH
..!

IN THIS HEAT, MY EYES
UH
UNUUUU ...!

..!?
WHERE
IS HE..?!

...HE PIERCED MY ARMORED SHOULDER SO EASILY...!
WITH JUST ONE ARM..
IMPOSSIBLE!
OH...
OOHHH ..!!
IT'S...
SOMETHING LIKE THAT...

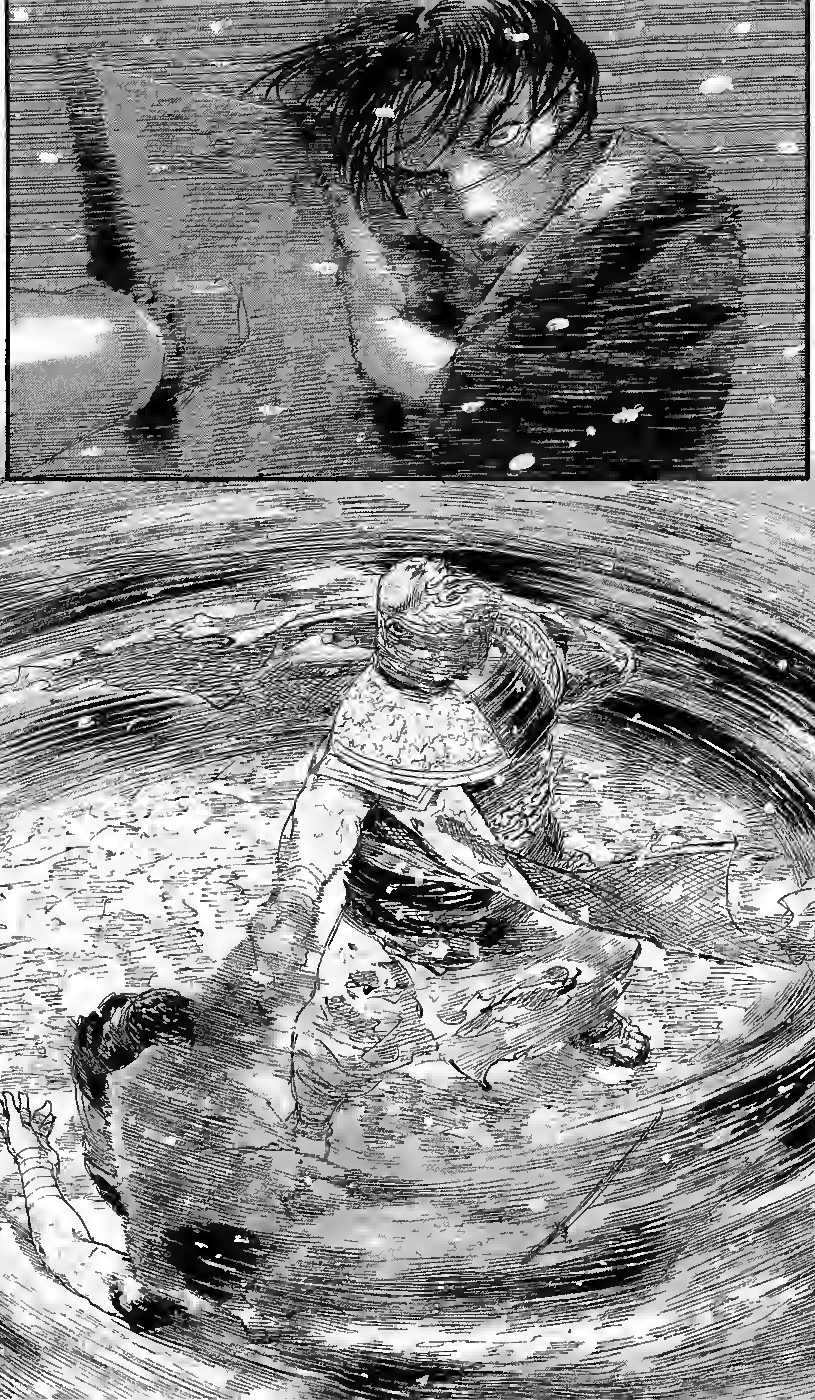
THIS HOLE IS...
KAMAA-AHHHH!!

フォ
……
ザザザザ

斬
吠!!

HAAHH!
HA!
KA AH!!
KA HH!!

森
PEH... KEH HEH HEH...
I GOT HI-



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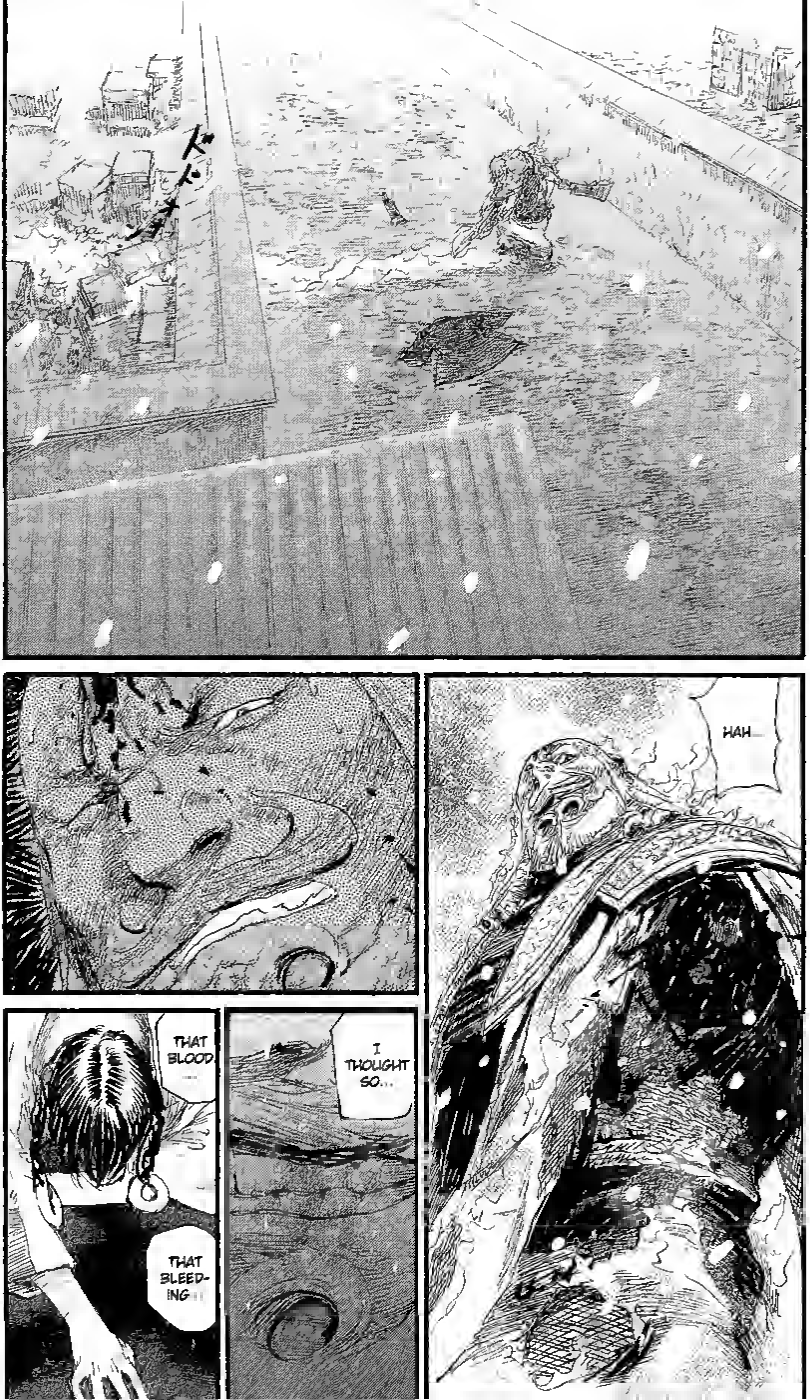
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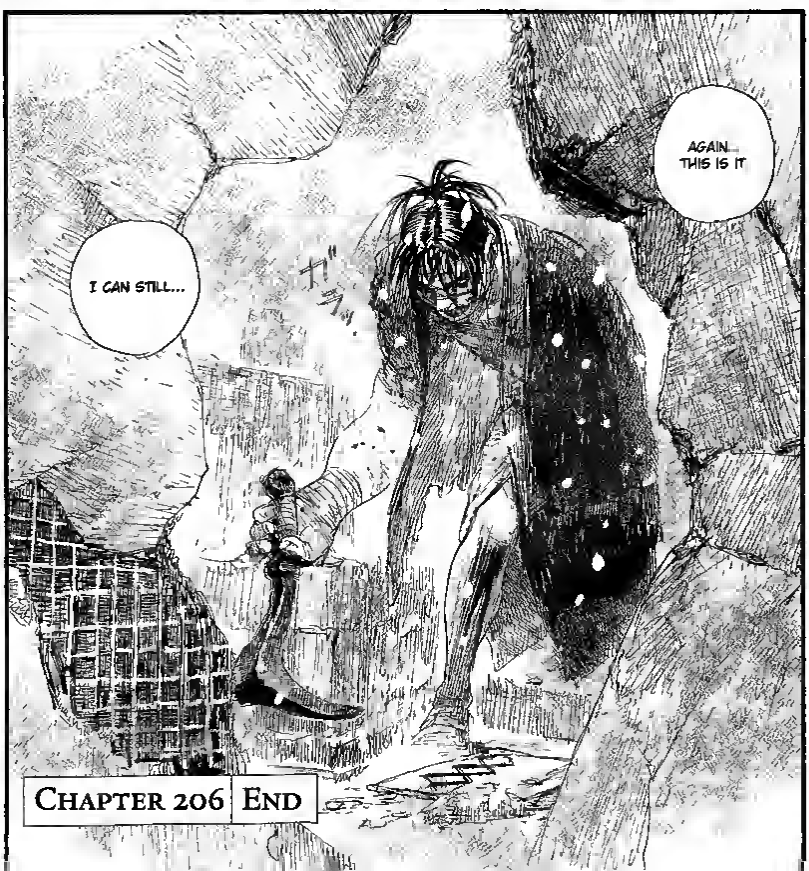
HAH...
I THOUGHT SO...
THAT BLOOD...
THAT BLEEDING!!

IT WAS THE GIRL'S BLOOD.
SENILE... HUH..?
HAVE I GONE SENILE..? EVEN THOUGH I HAD A BAD FEELING,
I ALLOWED YOU TO WALK RIGHT UP BEHIND ME..! KUH...



CHAPTER 206 | END